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GENERAL KNOWLES' PRESENTATION TO FLIGHT SCHOOL
GRADUATION CLASS, FORT RUCKER, ALA.
8 JUNE 1965

Thank you very much for those kind remarks. It was a very flattering introduction. It is a pleasure to be here this morning to participate with you in this graduation exercise.

As I look over this audience, I'm reminded of a story that I heard at a Kiwanis luncheon last week. As you know, Solomon had many wives. One day Wife Number 874 said, "Do you really love me?", and Solomon replied, "Honey, you are one in a thousand".

When I was invited to address this graduating class, I was delighted to accept out of respect and admiration for all of you who have successfully completed your flight training. When I sat down to think about what I was going to say, I rationalized that my remarks should be short, fairly light, with no more than two or three inspirational points, and certainly an adequate mixture of humor.

Having been closely associated with and a strong supporter of Army Aviation for a number of years, I found that there were more things that I wanted to say than could be included in the allocated time. In a sense I felt like a mosquito at a nudist camp. ~~Ed~~ knew what he had to do, but he didn't know where to start. In the short time that I have, I decided to cover three things that stand uppermost in my mind as I think about the overall Army Aviation program, past, present and future. These three points are safety, the aviation image, and the growth potential.

As for safety, I don't intend to bore you with a lot of statistics. I just want to say that each and every one of us has an obligation to prevent accidents and to reduce the prevailing aircraft accident rate. Any increase in the rate would not only be costly in terms of men and material, but also runs the risk of setting the entire Army Aviation program back several years. Resist that impulse to fly the most thrilling way. -- the way that startles passengers and observers. I know that the first time I went into a confined area in a helicopter, the pilot scared the daylights out of me, and when he made a maximum take-off from the same area, I didn't regain my normal coloring for several minutes. Now that I have been doing this for several years and recently in the course of my own training, I find that personally flying into and out of confined areas is more fun than playing golf. I also know, however, that there should be a valid reason to perform this operation, such as training or tactical mission, and that there is a proper safe way to accomplish the task.

Last week I was talking to Red Dog Hamilton about accidents we have had in the 11th Air Assault Division and the Aviation safety program in general, and he made a point that impressed me. He said that the one thing he would really like to see all young aviators do is to learn all of the aircraft systems. A thorough understanding of the systems would do a great deal toward reducing accident rates. And, of course, the pilot who makes this effort is also the one who will make the effort to follow prescribed procedures and seldom, if ever, will become involved in a stupid accident.

The second point I would like to make is to invite your attention to an article in the May issue of Army Aviation. The title of this article is "Improving the Image" by Phip Senéff, Chief of Army Aviation. As you probably know, Colonel Senéff spent ;a little over two years with the 11th Air Assault Division before filling his current post. This article is one that every aviator should read and re-read, and then re-read every three (3) months. There is one point he makes about teaching VIP's something about Army aviation once you have them aboard your aircraft. Let me assure you that Colonel Senéff practices exactly what he preaches. The first time I ever flew with him was in a U-8 from Fort Benning to Fort Belvoir back in 1963. We were no sooner in the air than he made me put on a headset and gave me an aeronautical map, and I had to do all the navigation, or at least follow every step of the way. He took great delight in answering all my questions. Then I made the stupid mistake of asking what the acceptable rate of descent was in a U-8. He immediately showed me, and I didn't really recover my stomach until we arrived at Davidson Army Airfield. I assure you, however, that my interest in Army aviation, which was already high, increased tenfold.

When Colonel Senéff says to be a soldier first and a flyer second, that is exactly what he means. Whatever ground-pounder you are supporting, be sure you thoroughly understand his problems and then bend every effort to show him how he can use Army aviation to greater advantage.

This is the way to improve the image. The task will not be easy. You will find much opposition. The biggest obstacle will be lack of understanding. In looking back at history, it took the United States Army 22 years from the inception of the 105mm howitzer til the first piece was in the hands of the troops, and it also took the Army until the beginning of World War II to modernize their artillery fire direction system, so we must be patient and always keep in mind that aviation is a means to an end and not an end in itself.

My third and last point is the growth potential of Army aviation. You should feel justifiably proud to be part of a program that has re-doubled in the past ten years, and one that I believe has every prospect of increasing its growth even more in the next ten years. From where I sit as Assistant Division Commander of the 11th Air Assault Division, I believe we have just scratched the surface in utilizing the full potential of the airmobile concept, and I expect to see spectacular improvements in the years ahead.

I could ramble on on this subject, but I'm reminded of the story about the little boy who asked his dad a question. His dad was busy reading the newspaper and not fully concentrating on the question that was asked, but mumbled, "Son, why don't you ask your mother?" The little boy thought for a minute, and then said, "Dad, I don't want to know that much about it".

To conclude my remarks, I want to read an essay written by a fifth grader in California. This was written a little over two years ago.

(Read Essay)

**Good luck in your future assignments and may you have many
safe flights and happy landings.**